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ABSTRACT

This public policy agenda lists the most pressing priorities for Puerto Ricans in the 1990s. The following education goals are outlined: (1) expand dropout prevention programs; (2) improve vocational and technical education; and (3) improve monitoring of the educational performance of Puerto Ricans. The following Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and substance abuse goals are outlined: (1) raise public awareness; (2) support increased funding; and (3) develop treatment programs for drug users. The following community economic development (CED) goals are outlined: (1) advocate new training and incentive programs; (2) expand the supply of affordable housing; (3) encourage financial investment; and (4) promote partnerships between the public and private sectors, nonprofit intermediaries, and community-based organizations. The following employment, job training, and welfare goals are outlined: (1) retain tax credits and benefits; (2) lengthen and improve job training under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA); (3) increase workplace literacy programs; and (4) implement the 1988 Family Support Act. The following civil rights goals are outlined: (1) support legislation to prevent discrimination; (2) oppose laws to establish English as the official language; (3) insist on accurate reporting of Puerto Ricans in census reports; and (4) ensure that redistricting empowers the Puerto Rican community. The following goals for Puerto Rico are outlined: (1) retain federal tax incentives; (2) support full parity in all social welfare programs; and (3) support self-determination. (FMW)

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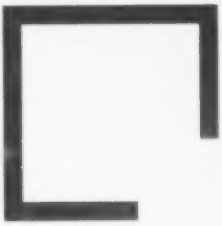

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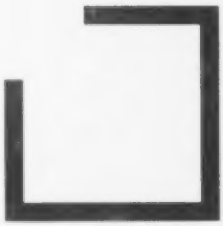

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The National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc., (NPRC) was founded in 1977 to further the social, economic, and political well-being of Puerto Ricans. NPRC is a nonprofit, tax-exempt association of over 100 organizations located throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico. Based in Washington, D.C., NPRC provides a presence and a voice at the national level for all Puerto Ricans.

To further its mission, NPRC has developed programs in three broad areas. Programs in advocacy, research, and policy analysis are carried out primarily in Washington, D.C. Programs designed to enhance the image of Puerto Ricans in the United States, such as the NPRC Life Achievement Awards, are conducted nationally. Partnership projects in community economic development are carried out locally. All programs are designed with the goal of empowering the community to enable it to effectively influence public policies and their implementation.

A Blueprint for Change: A Puerto Rican Agenda for the 1990s

National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc.

Adopted by the Board of Directors
February 8, 1991

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FOREWORD

The beginning of a new decade is a tempting opportunity for agendas. Like New Year's resolutions, it invites setting goals and making commitments for the future. The year 1980 was such a time, and the Puerto Rican community on the U.S. mainland joined other Latino groups in declaring the 1980s the Decade of the Hispanic. But considering how our situation had worsened rather than improved by the end of the decade, some reflection seems advisable as we move into the 1990s.

In the 1970s, a new consciousness arose about the advantages to Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans of collaborating and pooling their numbers. A newly aggressive Republican Party pursued these groups while the Democrats fiercely defended what they considered their traditional constituencies. Hispanics, we perceived, were being courted by the mainstream and we gladly played along.

The term "Hispanic" itself received a powerful boost in these years. The Spaniards used this word in the last century to refer to their cultural sphere of influence in the wake of Spain's crumbling overseas empire. In New York and other East Coast cities, the term was adopted after World War II and used to link Puerto Rican and Latin American immigrants in the face of common obstacles and discrimination. In the 1970s, after passage of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act, the federal government began using "Hispanic" as a way of collecting one set of data for all Hispanics, choosing not to maintain separate statis-

tics for different Hispanic ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans.

In the late 1970s, national organizations representing these groups began employing the term "Hispanic" to help build national constituencies. The two major political parties and the media also started using the term as an expedient umbrella to describe a sizable ethnic group that appeared to respond to common cultural and motivational triggers.

The Decade of the Hispanic did play itself out to some extent—the Hispanic community became established as a political and marketing reality. Hispanic individuals became more visible nationally in government, commerce, science, and the arts, and a Hispanic presence became evident in the media. Awareness of this new visibility and influence, as well as alarm over increasing immigration from Latin America, generated chauvinistic anti-Hispanic responses such as what has been termed the "English-only" movement.

But improved visibility did not necessarily translate into material progress for Hispanics as a whole. While some Hispanics prospered, the majority did not. Aggregate data reflect a steady, gradual deterioration in educational achievement, income, and social stability as well as a rise in welfare dependency. It appears that while "the system" did create opportunities for some Hispanics, major economic changes left others in especially vulnerable positions.

While the term "Hispanic" may be useful in marketing and politics, there are still significant

socioeconomic differences among the various Hispanic ethnic groups. Unlike African Americans, who share a common history, Hispanic Americans generally have a common culture but have been influenced by very different historical and economic forces. The increase in migration of Dominicans, Colombians, and especially Central Americans since 1980 has complicated an already intricate Hispanic mosaic.

Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens under the Jones Act in 1917. After World War II, the industrialization of the island—a U.S. possession since 1898—resulted in the decline of agriculture as a major employer and displaced a large part of the labor force. Between 1945 and 1965, aided by newly available low-cost air travel, over a million Puerto Ricans migrated to the mainland. Most gravitated to the cities and jobs that since the 19th century had facilitated the entry of immigrants into the economic mainstream. These jobs tended to be in labor-intensive industries such as textiles, garments, and leather. Puerto Ricans also occupied many low-skill positions in service industries such as hotels and restaurants and entry-level jobs in smokestack industries in the Northeast and Midwest.

But changes in technology and world trade patterns disrupted this picture. By the mid-1980s, almost one million industrial jobs, 47 percent of the industrial work force, had disappeared in the nine cities where most Puerto Ricans lived: New York City; Chicago; Philadelphia; Newark, New Jersey; Boston; Rochester, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; and Hartford and Bridgeport, Connecticut.

No other Hispanic group was forced to experience such an economic adjustment. The largely middle-class Cubans, mostly political refugees, tended to settle in south and central Florida in the early 1960s and rapidly regained their social and economic positions. New immigrants from Mexico joined older residents in areas of the Southwest Sunbelt that underwent rapid economic growth during the 1970s and 1980s. Their jobs were not well-paid, but they were available. (Puerto Ricans are thus far less likely to be part of the "working poor" than are Mexican Americans.) Dominicans and Central Americans did not arrive in large numbers until the 1980s. By that time the cities were beginning to rebound with new industries that were willing to exploit the typical industriousness of newly arrived immigrants. South Americans and Spaniards, often categorized as "Other Hispanics," tended to have atypically high levels of education and skills and hence adapted very differently than did poorer Hispanic groups.

Given these realities, it became apparent that social and economic indicators used to describe Hispanics did not accurately reflect the condition of Puerto Ricans. The long periods of unemployment faced by many Puerto Ricans produced a degree of breakdown in their families and neighborhoods and a pathology of dependency and despondency not experienced by other Hispanics. Puerto Ricans are significantly overrepresented among the very poor. They have a higher rate of school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, female-headed households, drug abuse, AIDS, welfare dependency, and female abstention from the labor force than any other Hispanic group. The Decade of the Hispanic passed us by like no other group.

For this reason, NPRC has called for public policies that are Puerto Rican-specific.

As we enter the 1990s, we recognize that we are *one* of the national Hispanic communities and that we do share some concerns, such as support for civil rights and opposition to the "English-only" movement. On certain key issues, however, such as welfare dependency and the link between AIDS and substance abuse, our problems are unique among Hispanics and in some ways resemble more the problems facing African Americans.

Besides working with other low-income communities on the U.S. mainland, we also need to develop closer ties to Puerto Ricans on the Island. Relations with our sister community in Puerto Rico have always been a sensitive point as we develop distinct policies to improve our situation. The mainland Puerto Rican community, though in close physical and emotional contact with the Island, has over the years developed a personality of its own. Like siblings we are very similar, but each of us is distinct. Puerto Rico is a Caribbean Latin American society, self-contained and autonomous despite its close relationship with the United States.

The mainland Puerto Rican community is a minority ethnic community within the U.S. mainland. Island Puerto Ricans cannot know what it means to be a minority and compete with other minorities; mainland Puerto Ricans cannot really know what it means to control institutions of power. Island Puerto Ricans negotiate with the U.S. government, even if they do so as a junior partner.

Mainland Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, negotiate with African Americans, other Hispanics, and Anglos within the U.S. mainland.

Despite these differences, and despite once subtle but increasingly clear cultural variations, NPRC believes the mainland Puerto Rican community's closest natural ally is the Island Puerto Rican community. Although our issues are often different, we should be the ones best able to understand each other's respective positions.

A PUERTO RICAN AGENDA

NPRC was created as a national advocate for mainland Puerto Ricans to present their perspective on national issues, draw attention to the problems confronting the Puerto Rican community, and recommend policies to resolve these problems. This Public Policy Agenda lists the most pressing priorities for Puerto Ricans in the 1990s and the federal policies needed to improve their social and economic position. The agenda serves as a long-term guide for NPRC's annual action plans over the next decade by projecting where the Puerto Rican community should be by the year 2000. It also is an attempt to provoke a broad dialogue among concerned Puerto Ricans about where the community as a whole, as well as NPRC, should concentrate its efforts.

After more than a decade of experience of working with the Puerto Rican community, NPRC has identified what it believes are the six most important issues for the NPRC advocacy program over the next ten years. These are (1) education; (2) AIDS and substance abuse; (3) community economic development; (4) employment, job training and welfare; (5) civil rights; and (6) federal policies on Puerto Rico. NPRC will also closely monitor the federal budget because of the impact it has on all social programs.

The process of selecting these issues has been difficult because of the great number of problems confronting the Puerto Rican community. Reducing the high rates of teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, and

infant mortality are all major challenges. So is increasing the minimum wage to enable poor working families, including single mothers, to earn enough to feed, clothe, and house their children adequately. NPRC chose to focus on the six issues outlined in this agenda because it believes this is where it can be most effective from the vantage point of Washington, D.C.

These are also the issues for which NPRC can work best with member organizations to influence Congress and the Executive Branch. NPRC is not a self-appointed advocate but a membership association representing over 100 Puerto Rican organizations nationwide. In the next decade, NPRC will increasingly rely on members to write letters to their Congressional representatives; meet with these elected officials in their home districts; and share information on how federal policies affect the education, housing, health, and other services the community agencies offer.

Over the last 20 years, Puerto Rican organizations have become increasingly aware of how their communities are affected by city and state policies, and have responded accordingly. Now is the time for grass-roots agencies to make their voices heard in the nation's capital. NPRC is the vehicle to help them do this.

ISSUES FOR THE 1990s

EDUCATION

NPRC believes poverty in the Puerto Rican community can be reduced significantly only if the enormous gap in educational performance between Puerto Ricans and other Americans—the "Puerto Rican educational deficit"—is greatly reduced. Parents, teachers, school administrators, businesses, community-based organizations (CBOs), state and local governments, and Puerto Rican students themselves must all work toward eliminating this deficit. But the federal government also has a critical role to play.

Over the next decade, NPRC will call on the federal government to demonstrate its full commitment to Puerto Rican/Hispanic education by providing more support for Head Start, Bilingual and Vocational Education, and Chapter I Remedial Programs; involving more non-English-speaking parents in their children's education; and expanding eligibility for federally funded school improvement programs to CBOs, many of which already serve out-of-school youth. NPRC will urge the U.S. Department of Education to:

- identify and expand successful drop-out prevention programs so Puerto Rican youth can graduate from high school prepared to directly enter the labor market or enroll in college;

- work with businesses to develop a national

strategy which will equip noncollege-bound youth for employment by raising the status and quality of vocational/technical education; and

• disaggregate data on Hispanic subgroups, particularly statistics on dropouts, to better track the educational performance of Puerto Ricans.

As we enter the 1990s, we are told our country is in crisis because the portion of young people who leave high school before graduation is nearly 30 percent. But the crisis is far more acute in Puerto Rican communities, where the drop-out rate often exceeds 50 percent. And it shows no sign of declining.

NPRC believes drop-out prevention programs must begin at an early age, long before students enter high school or even middle school. The federal government can launch a *real* attack against the drop-out rate by fully funding Head Start, the preschool program which provides low-income children with comprehensive education, health, and nutrition services. This is *not* being done now. There is enough funding to serve only 25 percent of the children eligible for Head Start.

Studies have proven that Head Start works for very young children. It is less clear which drop-out prevention strategies are most effective with at-risk Hispanics enrolled in middle schools and high schools. NPRC will work with Congress, the Department of Education, member organizations, and local school districts to identify and publicize successful drop-out prevention strategies, then urge that these strategies be replicated throughout the country. In addition,

NPRC supports increased funding for drop-out recovery programs that prepare out-of-school youth for the General Education Development (GED) high school equivalency exam.

Many of the Hispanic community's educational advocacy efforts over the past two decades have focused on the rights of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students and their need for quality bilingual education programs. While it is important to expand opportunities for LEP students, over the next decade NPRC will focus more attention on English-dominant Puerto Rican children. They make up the majority of Puerto Rican students and are dropping out of school in high numbers.

High quality vocational education could be extremely effective in keeping young people in school by preparing them for well-paying jobs with possibilities for career advancement. In many large cities where Puerto Ricans represent the majority of Hispanic students, Hispanics are disproportionately represented in vocational programs that lack both state-of-the-art curricula and adequate lab conditions. This has to change. Government must work with the business sector and make a national commitment to noncollege-bound youth. Our country's greatest economic competitors—Japan and Germany—have done this and the effort has paid off handsomely for them.

School-employer linkages must be strengthened so businesses can help design vocational courses which teach students the skills required by an increasingly technological economy. Cooperative pro-

grams, in which students "earn while they learn," should place young people in jobs related to their studies. Vocational education students would then be more likely to remain in school, especially if the companies that employ them in high school promise to hire them after graduation.

While many young Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics may choose the vocational education route, others will decide to enroll in college. Very few do so now. According to 1984 census data, the percentage of Hispanics who graduate from college and other postsecondary institutions is lower than for either Blacks or Whites. Only 3.2 percent of Hispanics ages 22-24 obtained college degrees in 1984 compared to 6.9 percent of Blacks and 15.2 percent of Whites; 6.5 percent of Hispanics ages 25-29 graduated compared to 10.4 percent of Blacks and 21.3 percent of Whites.

The percentage of Puerto Ricans and other low-income populations enrolled in college has been steadily declining since 1976, mainly because of skyrocketing tuition increases, federal cuts in financial aid, and the shift from grant-based to loan-based aid. To help reverse this decline, there must be increased financial assistance for low-income populations and expansion of programs such as Upward Bound and Talent Search that were established for disadvantaged students under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

The Department of Education should keep separate statistics on the participation of different Hispanic ethnic groups in higher education and other federal educational programs. The Census Bureau,

for instance, publishes separate figures for Hispanic subgroups on the poverty rate, the years of school completed, and the percentage of female-headed households. Once the Department of Education stops collapsing data on Puerto Ricans under the general category of "Hispanic," it will be possible to document the number of Puerto Ricans who drop out of high school, participate in federal educational programs, and graduate from college. It will then be easier to develop specific public policies to meet Puerto Rican educational needs.

AIDS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

AIDS, the devastating epidemic which destroys the body's immune system, was once identified as a disease affecting primarily homosexual and bisexual men. This is no longer the case. AIDS, or the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is spreading rapidly in minority communities, especially among Puerto Ricans. The incidence rate of AIDS is far higher among Puerto Ricans than among Mexican Americans or other Hispanics.

Unlike other Hispanics, Puerto Ricans have contracted AIDS mostly through intravenous (IV) drug use or through sexual relations with IV-drug users. This is why there must be *Puerto Rican-specific policies* directed not only at AIDS but also at drug abuse, the primary means by which the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, is transmitted among Puerto Ricans. NPRC will respond to these two interrelated problems by:

- raising public awareness of how the AIDS epidemic is spreading among Puerto Ricans at an alarming rate, particularly among women and children;

- supporting more federal funding for AIDS prevention, treatment, and research that targets minorities, IV-drug users, and sexual partners of IV-drug users; and

- calling for treatment on demand for drug users and drug abuse outreach demonstration pro-

grams to identify the most effective methods to get addicts off the streets and into treatment.

As the 1990s begin, AIDS is ravaging Puerto Rican communities in major metropolitan areas such as New York City; Philadelphia; Newark, New Jersey; and San Juan, Puerto Rico. In New York City, for instance, where Hispanics make up 24 percent of the population, 32 percent of women with AIDS and 37 percent of children diagnosed with the disease in 1990 were Hispanic, mostly Puerto Rican. And the situation is getting worse. In 1990, the New York City Health Department predicted that by 1993 the number of Hispanics infected by AIDS would be more than *double* the number recorded in 1988.

IV-drug users make up a significant number of Puerto Ricans infected with the AIDS virus. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control, for example, Island-born Puerto Ricans who develop AIDS are twice as likely to be heterosexual drug users than they are to be homosexual non-IV-drug users. (About half the Puerto Ricans living on the mainland were born in Puerto Rico.) The situation is the reverse for Mexican-born people with AIDS, who are 18 times more likely to be homosexual non-IV-drug users than heterosexual drug users.

NPRC believes there are two principal reasons why AIDS is so prevalent in the Puerto Rican community. After the gay community, the epidemic strikes mainly poor, inner-city minorities. Puerto Ricans first, are poorer, and second, are more urbanized than other Hispanics. According to the U.S. census, 31 percent of Puerto Rican families fell below the poverty

level in 1988 compared to 25 percent of Mexican American families and 17 percent of Cuban American families. And over *90 percent* of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland live in major metropolitan areas such as New York City and Philadelphia.

NPRC sees AIDS as the most terrible symptom of the poverty and despair pervading the community, but it is a problem that *we can do something about.* NPRC has advocated for direct care and treatment of people with AIDS and supported the Ryan White AIDS legislation, which provides emergency assistance to the 16 cities hardest hit by AIDS. Seven of these cities—New York ; Chicago; Philadelphia; Boston; Newark and Jersey City, New Jersey; and San Juan, Puerto Rico—have large concentrations of Puerto Ricans. The legislation also provides "early intervention" drugs to slow the onset of AIDS in HIV-infected people who have not yet developed full-blown AIDS.

NPRC will continue to work in this area during the next decade and will call on ADAMHA (the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to focus more of their efforts on AIDS prevention and research in minority communities. The kinds of HIV-prevention activities that have succeeded among gay White males often do not work as well with Blacks and Hispanics, or with IV-drug users and their sexual partners. NPRC will call on CDC to begin disaggregating data for Puerto Ricans with AIDS so the community can obtain statistics on precisely how many of the Hispanics diagnosed with AIDS are Puerto Rican.

Drug rehabilitation slots should be provided for all addicts who want to enter treatment. The most effective treatment programs not only help addicts end their chemical dependency, but also provide them with education, job training, and counseling so clients can identify the root cause of their addiction.

The federal government can more effectively combat the interrelated problems of AIDS and substance abuse among minorities by channeling more funding to community-based organizations (CBOs) to implement AIDS prevention and substance abuse treatment programs. CBOs also can become more involved in testing people for HIV infection and in counseling clients at risk for HIV whether their test results are positive or negative.

By the end of the decade, we must end the AIDS epidemic in the Puerto Rican community by encouraging all community institutions, not just those dealing with substance abuse and health matters, to join the battle against AIDS. There also must be more coordination with AIDS organizations in Puerto Rico; the rate of AIDS in San Juan is higher than for any U.S. city except San Francisco. AIDS prevention and drug treatment strategies that work on the Island could be duplicated in mainland Puerto Rican communities.

In the late 1980s, the number of homosexual-related AIDS cases among non-Hispanic Whites was substantially reduced through a massive education campaign. The 1990s must be the decade when Puerto Ricans confront the AIDS menace head-on, just as gays have done, until the epidemic is finally defeated.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To promote the development of strong neighborhoods and create communities that are able to control their resources and break the cycle of poverty, NPRC will:

- advocate for new training and incentive programs for small businesses and community economic development;

- call on federal and state governments to expand the supply of decent and affordable housing for low-income families and the number of subsidized housing units for households that fall below the poverty line;

- encourage financial institutions to finance affordable housing, meet the credit needs of Puerto Rican communities, provide financial services to low-income families, and invest in local businesses; and

- promote partnerships between the public and private sectors, nonprofit intermediaries, and community-based organizations.

The Puerto Rican community is waging a broad struggle to rescue its urban neighborhoods. The deterioration of our urban areas has paralleled the socioeconomic decline of Puerto Rican families that have often been confined to ghettoes. Puerto Ricans are concentrated in the blighted central cities of the Northeast and Midwest; 96 percent of all mainland Puerto Ricans live in urban areas and 75 percent in

central cities. Approximately one-third live in New York City, where they often encounter worse housing conditions and pay more for rent than other groups. In 1987 approximately one-third of all Puerto Ricans lived in physically inadequate housing, almost three times the rate for Whites.

Puerto Ricans have been more affected by rising housing costs because the great majority live in rental housing. According to data on Hispanic subgroups from the 1983 Annual Housing Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, about 57 percent of Hispanic and Puerto Rican households rent their homes compared to 35 percent of the general population. In New York City, 89 percent of Puerto Ricans rented their homes in 1987 compared to 61 percent of Whites and 75 percent of Blacks.

As the supply of affordable low-income housing has diminished, many Puerto Ricans have been pushed out on the streets or have become part of the "hidden homeless," forced to double up in overcrowded and substandard conditions. An increasing number of senior citizens fall below the poverty line and have been frozen out of the housing market. NPRC will advocate for more low-income housing and support services for both the elderly and for another vulnerable population—the homeless.

Residential and commercial development are essential for Puerto Rican neighborhoods to stem the tide of displacement and the cycle of poverty. Puerto Ricans must draw in public services and investment if they are to develop already existing resources and rebuild their community's economic base. The goal is

to develop the community into a neighborhood where people can both live and work. Creating opportunities for existing residents and businesses is essential for this to happen.

Strong community-based organizations are essential to bringing about economic development in Puerto Rican communities. These organizations produce needed services which the market does not provide. Affordable housing, training and technical assistance for small businesses, access to credit, and job training and counseling are among the responsibilities of these organizations. They also spawn local leaders who frequently go on to play broader roles in Puerto Rican neighborhoods. To build the capacity of this new generation of leaders, NPRC calls for increased participation of Puerto Ricans in the development of bilingual training materials and curricula targeted for community leaders and small business entrepreneurs.

The growth of nonprofit organizations in the 1980s has been crucial to the development of low-income housing and commercial revitalization efforts. NPRC strongly supports the growth of nonprofit agencies that build, renovate, purchase and manage low-income housing programs, and revitalize commercial districts for Puerto Rican communities.

Partnerships between governments at all levels, the private sector, and intermediaries increase the ability of local groups to undertake community projects. The private sector's capacity for assisting economic development has not been tapped effec-

tively by Puerto Ricans. Recent legislation and changes in banking regulations are opening up the potential of the private sector. Some important new catalysts include the federal low-income housing tax credits, the Community Reinvestment Act, state enterprise zones, microenterprise loan pools, housing trust funds, and the growth of community development banks.

Another important stimulant has been the growth in the diversity of funders of community economic development. New sources of money include insurance and pension funds, corporations, religious institutions, and community foundations. NPRC believes government agencies, banks, corporations, foundations, and other institutions must focus more attention specifically on nonprofit Puerto Rican community developers and provide them with more financial support.

Adequate investment by banks and other financial insitutions is critical to the health and vitality of Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Increasing access to capital for low-income communities is an essential part of stimulating reinvestment in urban areas. Access to financial resources can be achieved only when adequate banking services are available. Enforcement of federal legislation that ensures reinvestment in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods is the primary vehicle by which banks and savings institutions will fulfill their responsibilities to local Puerto Rican communities. In addition, NPRC will advocate for the creation of locally based financial institutions.

EMPLOYMENT, JOB TRAINING, AND WELFARE

Census data indicate that 31 percent of Puerto Rican families fell below the poverty level in 1988 compared to 25 percent for all Hispanics. NPRC believes that besides education, employment and job training are the keys to reducing the poverty level and to rebuilding strong Puerto Rican communities on the U.S. mainland and in Puerto Rico. In the 1990s, NPRC will support:

- the expansion of employment opportunities by retaining the Targeted Job Tax Credit and Section 936 federal tax benefits for U.S. companies doing business in Puerto Rico;

- longer and better quality job training programs targeted to single mothers and at-risk youth under the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA);

- greater federal involvement in work place literacy programs to upgrade the academic skills of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics employed in low-wage jobs; and

- fair implementation of the 1988 Family Support Act, focusing on regulations in states such as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Massachusetts which have large concentrations of Puerto Ricans.

Since 1979, the Targeted Job Tax Credit (TJTC) has encouraged thousands of employers to hire eco-

nomically disadvantaged workers, the disabled, and many other Americans who otherwise may not have found work. The TJTC is a federal program which provides a tax credit to employers who are willing to hire hard-to-employ individuals. Over 500,000 people a year find jobs under TJTC. The program for 18- to 22-year-old youth is especially important to Puerto Ricans and must be expanded to include 23- to 24-year-olds; the older youth recently were disqualified from the program in order to reduce costs.

In Puerto Rico, over 300,000 jobs—one-third of all jobs on the Island—have been created by what are known as Section 936 companies. Since 1976, the federal government has provided tax incentives to companies that invest in Puerto Rico under Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code. By stimulating economic development, these incentives have greatly increased the number of manufacturing jobs on the Island, especially in the pharmaceutical, electronics, food, and apparel industries.

Several 936 companies also have supported job training and educational programs in Puerto Rico, funded mainly through charitable contributions for specific projects. NPRC intends to work with some of these companies to establish similar job training and employment initiatives in mainland Puerto Rican communities.

One of the mainland community's most serious problems is the fact that 40 percent of Puerto Rican families are headed by single mothers compared to 23 percent of all Hispanic families (from 1989 census figures). Many of these women have had to turn to

public assistance and see no way out of their dilemma. That is why NPRC strongly favors amendments to increase minority participation in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the federal government's major employment and training program.

For too long, JTPA has underserved Puerto Ricans and other Latinos because of "creaming," namely serving the most job-ready individuals with the fewest training needs from the pool of people eligible to participate. Welfare recipients and at-risk youth need to receive more and improved services through JTPA's network of over 600 Service Delivery Areas (SDAs). And JTPA participants should be allowed to choose among various child-care options, including family-based care. This is critical for Puerto Ricans, who often prefer to leave their children with relatives or in another home-based setting.

More Puerto Ricans need to sit on the Private Industry Councils (PICs), which along with local elected officials plan job training programs for their particular SDAs. (PIC membership must include representatives from organized labor, education agencies, community-based organizations, and public employment services.) Local PICs help determine, for instance, the *type* of secretarial or electronics training programs available in an SDA and the *length* of that program's educational component.

Many Puerto Ricans in secretarial and other skills training programs require English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and/or other remedial classes before they can enter the labor force. The more extensive the program's educational component, the more

likely it is that Puerto Ricans will enroll in and graduate from the program.

Education for former welfare recipients should not end when they enter the work force. To prevent them from becoming dependent on public assistance again, the federal government should play a greater role in workplace literacy projects. These are programs in which business, labor, and educational institutions collaborate to operate English-language and basic education classes at the work site. Businesses generally give their employees several hours a week of release time to study. The employees, in turn, use an equal number of hours of their own time to study.

Workplace literacy programs could help former welfare recipients upgrade their academic skills so they can move forward in their careers instead of backward on to welfare again. On-site classes could also help Puerto Rican men employed at low-wage jobs to improve their reading and computational skills so they can increase their earning power. These men would then be better equipped to support both themselves and their families.

In 1988, Congress passed the Family Support Act (FSA) to change the mission of state-operated welfare systems from simply income maintenance to promotion of economic self-sufficiency through education and job training. The Act requires each state to establish a Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) to prepare welfare recipients for employment. States must provide child care to JOBS participants and other parents receiving

AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) if they are enrolled in training programs.

NPRC has been monitoring and will continue to monitor the Family Support Act and assess its impact on Puerto Rican AFDC recipients in major metropolitan areas such as New York City; Philadelphia; and Newark, New Jersey. NPRC will share the information gathered with member organizations, Congressional committees, and state advocacy groups.

CIVIL RIGHTS

In the coming decade, NPRC's major efforts in the area of civil rights will be to:

- support legislation and other efforts that will protect Puerto Ricans from employment, housing, and language discrimination;

- oppose all laws and regulations that would establish English as the official language of the United States or of any state or local jurisdiction;

- insist that the Bureau of the Census provide an accurate count of Puerto Ricans in the 1990 decennial census and that post-census reports correctly identify Puerto Ricans; and

- work closely with other interested organizations to ensure that redistricting at the municipal, state, and federal levels, which follows the 1990 census, further empowers the Puerto Rican community.

NPRC strongly endorses the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, an updated version of the 1990 bill vetoed by President George Bush. The Civil Rights Act would overturn six controversial decisions rendered by the Supreme Court in 1989 that erased many of the civil rights gains achieved over the last 25 years, particularly with regard to employment discrimination. Such discrimination hinders the economic and social advancement of the Puerto Rican community. During the coming decade, NPRC will participate actively in the nationwide campaign to pass the Civil Rights Act.

NPRC joins other groups, such as Mexican Americans and Asian Americans, in seeking repeal of the employers sanctions provisions of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). IRCA penalizes employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers. According to a March 1990 report from the General Accounting Office, the investigatory agency of Congress, employers sanctions have resulted in a "widespread pattern of discrimination" against Hispanics, Asians, and others who "look" or "sound foreign."

Language discrimination will continue to be an important civil rights issue for Puerto Ricans in the 1990s because of legislation inspired by the "English-only" movement. Laws making English the official language would restrict the civil rights of individuals with limited English proficiency by denying them equal participation in the electoral process and in the educational and legal systems. These laws could also eliminate public services such as voter information that are now provided in Spanish by government agencies. Moreover, "English-only" legislation could strengthen those who want to deny Puerto Rican children, who are U.S. citizens, their right to bilingual education.

NPRC will work on several fronts in the years ahead to politically empower the Puerto Rican community. First, it will insist that the federal government ensure an accurate census count of Puerto Ricans in the 1990 decennial census and that post-census reports correctly identify Puerto Ricans. Second, NPRC will monitor the reapportionment and redistricting that will follow the census to ensure

that Puerto Rican voting strength is fairly apportioned and not diluted.

The Bureau of the Census, which falls under the Department of Commerce, has consistently undercounted Puerto Ricans in the past. Since funding formulas for many federal social service programs are based on census data, the undercount will deprive the Puerto Rican community of equal participation in these programs. It also will influence the redistricting which will occur in many states, especially in those such as New York that have suffered losses in population.

NPRC and its member organizations will oppose any effort to redraw political boundaries that would result in the underrepresentation of Puerto Ricans. Mechanisms and practices used in the past to deny Puerto Ricans equal opportunity by making it more difficult for them to elect Puerto Rican officials will be challenged. These mechanisms include gerrymandering political districts in order to fracture or overconcentrate Puerto Rican voting strength, and creating or maintaining at-large rather than single-member electoral districts. Measures that dilute the Puerto Rican vote could violate the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which protects the rights of ethnic and language minorities, and the federal equal protection principle of one person, one vote.

FEDERAL POLICIES ON PUERTO RICO

While NPRC's primary constituency is the mainland Puerto Rican community, the well-being of Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico is also a major concern. Both communities must deal with the terrible problems of AIDS and drugs, as well as with education, housing, nutrition, and the development of a viable economic base. To this end, NPRC will support:

- the retention of federal tax incentives which encourage economic development in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico by attracting industry to the Island;

- full parity for Puerto Rico in all federal social welfare programs; and

- self-determination for Puerto Rico on the future political status of the Island.

As discussed in the Employment, Job Training, and Welfare section of this agenda, NPRC believes that tax incentives for Section 936 companies that invest in Puerto Rico must be retained. These companies have raised per capita income in Puerto Rico, helping to create a stable middle class of skilled workers in the industrial sector. The elimination of 936 tax incentives could lead to an economic crisis on the Island by causing a significant increase in unemployment. This crisis would have serious implications for mainland Puerto Rican communities, since thousands of Islanders probably would be forced to emigrate to the mainland in search of employment.

Although Puerto Rico's poverty rate exceeds 50 percent, more than double that of Mississippi, the country's poorest state, Island residents have been denied full parity in major federal social welfare programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Food Stamps. Puerto Rico has suffered severely as a result of these policies.

In 1981, for instance, after Congress replaced Puerto Rico's Food Stamp Program with a Nutrition Block Grant, the Island had to tighten eligibility standards and deny nutritional assistance to over 100,000 needy households. Families enrolled in the block grant program now receive far less assistance than similar families on the mainland or in U.S. territories such as Guam.

The $79 million cap placed on Medicaid payments for Puerto Rico has been especially devastating because of the impact the AIDS epidemic has had on the Island. Medicaid now pays *none of the costs* for AIDS in Puerto Rico; in 1990, only about 200 HIV-infected people received AZT, the drug which delays the onset of full-blown AIDS, when an estimated 2,000 people really needed it.

Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, an issue affecting *all* Puerto Ricans—both on the Island and on the mainland—has remained unresolved for almost a century. This problem must be solved by Puerto Ricans themselves, in accordance with international law. NPRC supports the participation of nonresident Puerto Ricans in dealing with this issue. It also believes the U.S. Congress and the Ex-

ecutive Branch must accept the free will of Puerto Ricans on the status question, whether they choose enhanced commonwealth, statehood, or independence.

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THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

NPRC, its member organizations, and Puerto Rican community leaders face an enormous challenge in the 1990s. Together we must advocate for public policies that will end the mass exodus of Puerto Rican youth from school and steer them to college or to quality vocational education programs. We all must fight drug abuse and the spread of AIDS on the national, state, and local levels. We need to revive the urban neighborhoods where the overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans live and promote job training programs that will radically reduce the number of Puerto Rican families dependent on public assistance.

Puerto Ricans can help achieve these objectives by becoming more politically active—joining political campaigns to elect more Puerto Rican and pro-Puerto Rican public officials, becoming delegates to state and local party conventions, and of course encouraging all Puerto Ricans to vote. With increased political participation, it will be easier to convince federal, state, and local governments to develop and implement policies that will improve the economic and social position of Puerto Ricans.

But influencing public policy is not the only way to reach these goals. Individuals—parents, students, community leaders, professionals, and representatives from business—must themselves take action to improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable Puerto Ricans. Every year, as part of its Life Achievement Awards Program, NPRC honors distin-

guished Puerto Ricans who can provide positive role models for Puerto Rican youth, but there are additional steps that need to be taken.

All parents must encourage their children to study hard and excel in school. Professionals and university students must mentor or "adopt" young students who need academic role models. They must also work with the parents of children who are doing poorly in school or not attending at all. Puerto Ricans from the business world must address school audiences about how to open a small business and offer to hire students who graduate from high school with good grades. More Puerto Ricans must volunteer at community institutions, which are stationed on the front lines of the battle against poverty, and provide them with financial support.

As the new decade begins, NPRC calls on the increasing number of Puerto Ricans who have overcome poverty and entered the economic mainstream to join the struggle to achieve the goals set in *A Blueprint for Change: A Puerto Rican Agenda for the 1990s*.

As President George Bush stated: "From now on in America any definition of a successful life must include serving others." This must become the credo of the Puerto Rican community if these ambitious goals are to be accomplished.

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